

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 14199 120348Z

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AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PINS, BM, TH

SUBJECT : LAHU - GUB CLASH

REF: BANGKOK A-224, AUGUST 3, 1973

SUMMARY: LAHU TROOPS BASED IN NORTH THAILAND ATTACKED A BURMESE GARRISON SEPTEMBER 1. THE ATTACK WAS PART OF A SERIES OF CLASHES BETWEEN THE LAHU AND THE BURMESE BEGINNING LAST JANUARY. OTHER BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS HAVE FROM TIME TO TIME PARTICIPATED. INTELLIGENCE ELEMENTS OF THE SUPREME COMMAND APPEAR TO HAVE HAD A HAND IN HELPING THE LAHU OBTAIN ARMS. IF BURMESE FORCES SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES, THE SEPTEMBER 1 INCIDENT COULD DETRACT FROM RECENT PROGRESS IN RTG/GUB RELATIONS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO STRESS TO THE RTG THE DANGERS IN SUPPORTING THESE ELEMENTS. (AMERICAN CONSULATE, CHIANG MAI CONTRIBUTED THE FIRST THREE PARAGRAPHS AND EMBASSY BANGKOK ADDED PARAGRAPHS 4 AND 5.) END SUMMARY.

1. BOTH THE "BANGKOK POST" AND "THE NATION" HAVE CARRIED STORIES OF LAHU ATTACKS ON A BURMESE ARMY POST NORTH OF MAE AI SUB-DISTRICT IN CHIANG MAI. INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE CONFIRMS THE GENERAL THRUST OF THESE STORIES ALTHOUGH THE MAGNITUDE OF ACTION APPEARS SOME WHAT LESS THAN IN NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS. ACCORDING TO A BPP SPOT REPORT, 200 LAHU BELONGING TO THE PU CHANG LUANG (MAN-GOD) GROUP, AND COMMANDED BY PU CHANG

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 14199 120348Z

LUANG'S SON, CHA-U, ATTACKED A 40-MAN BURMESE GARRISON AT

BON PANG HUA LAT (VICINITY NC 302222) AT 0630 SEPTEMBER 1. THE BURMESE ARMY, UNDER THE COMMAND OF LT. ONG SAN, SUFFERED ONE KILLED IN ACTION AND FIVE WOUNDED. THE LAHU HAD TWO KILLED IN ACTION AND THREE WOUNDED. LAHU CASUALTIES WERE TAKEN TO FANG DISTRICT HEALTH STATION.

2. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM THAT TWO WOUNDED MEN ARE IN CHIANG MAI HOSPITAL. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO HOSPITAL AUTHORITIES, THESE MEN ARE SHAN ATTEMPTING TO PASS THEMSELVES OFF AS LAHU.

3. HERewith IS A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE RECENT ATTACK:

A. A LAHU REBELLION AGAINST THE BURMESE BROKE OUT EARLY IN JANUARY AND SHAN DISSIDENTS AT THAT TIME PROVIDED SOME ASSISTANCE. THE LAHU WERE PRIMARILY IN TWO GROUPS: ONE NEAR FANG IN CHIANG MAI AND THE OTHER NEAR MAE SAI IN CHIANG RAI. THE RTG ALSO OFFERED REFUGE TO REBELS FLEEING BURMA AND SOME AMMUNITION.

B. IN APRIL, U NU'S PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY PARTY (PDP) BEGAN OFFERING ASSISTANCE TO LAHU IN THE FANG AREA AND THE SHAN APPARENTLY BACKED OFF. THE PDP SENT TRAINERS AND SOME EQUIPMENT TO A NEWLY-FORMED LAHU TRAINING CAMP ACROSS THE BORDER FROM FANG AT NAMYAWN (NC 4335). SOME LAHU FROM A GROUP NEAR MAE SAI ALSO REPORTEDLY MOVED TO THE NAM YAWN CAMP.

C. IN EARLY JUNE, THE LAHU, NOW CALLING THEMSELVES LAHU UNITED LIBERATION UNIT (LULU) ATTACKED BURMESE ARMY GARRISONS IN THE VICINITY OF THE SEPTEMBER 1 ATTACKS.

D. BY EARLY JULY, LULU APPEARED TO BE HAVING DIFFICULTIES AND THE PDP HAD WITHDRAWN ITS ASSISTANCE.

E. THE SHAN APPEARED TO RE-EMERGE AS LAHU ALLIES IN JULY. ACCORDING TO CHIANG RAI POLICE OFFICIALS, AN ARMS SHIPMENT THAT THE CHIANG SAEN PROVINCIAL POLICE CAPTURED JULY 6 WAS INTENDED FOR A SHAN LEADER IN THE MAE SAI AREA, CAPTAIN SAI KAEU, WHO WAS GOING TO FORWARD AT LEAST SOME OF THE ARMS TO THE LAHU. COL. CHAMNONG RODCHAROEN (SEE PARAGRAPH 4) REPORTEDLY ARRANGED

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 14199 120348Z

FOR THE SHIPMENT. THE SHAN CONNECTION WAS FURTHER EMPHASIZED ON JULY 14 WHEN SAI KAEU SENT FIVE LAHU LEADERS FROM MAE SAI TO CHIANG MAI WHERE THEY TOOK UP RESIDENCE WITH SHAN STATE ARMY (SSA) SECRETARY GENERAL SAO WAI.

F. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES IN CHIANG RAI, THE GUNS CAPTURED ON JULY 6 WERE FORWARDED TO SAI KAEU AFTER CHAMNONG NEGOTIATED THEIR RELEASE FROM THE POLICE.

4. BACKGROUND: CHAMNONG IS THE HEAD OF THE ARMED FORCES INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS CENTER (AFIOC) IN NORTH THAILAND. AFIOC IS COMMANDED BY GEN. WANIOP ROCHANAWISIT, WHO IS ON THE STAFF OF THE SUPREME COMMAND HEADQUARTERS IN BANGKOK. AFIOC HANDLES THE SUPREME COMMAND'S RELATIONS WITH AND ASSISTANCE TO THE SSA AND THE PDP. ALTHOUGH AFIOC OFFICERS USUALLY DO NOT DIRECTLY SPONSOR ARMS SMUGGLING FOR DISSIDENT GROUPS IN BURMA, THEY ARE AWARE OF THE DISSIDENTS' SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES AND PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR THEM WHEN THEY ENCOUNTER PROBLEMS WITH THE THAI POLICE.

5. COMMENT: CHAMNONG'S APPARENTLY HELPING THE LAHU OBTAIN THE CAPABILITY FOR THE SEPTEMBER 1 ATTACK DEMONSTRATES ONCE AGAIN THE THE SUPREME COMMAND, PERSISTS IN ITS BELIEF THAT BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS PROVIDE A BUFFER BETWEEN THAILAND THE BURMESE COMMUNIST PARTY/WHITE FLAG. WE WILL CONTINUE TO POINT OUT TO THE RTG THAT SUCH ACTIONS ENDANGER RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN RTG-GUB RELATIONS.
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